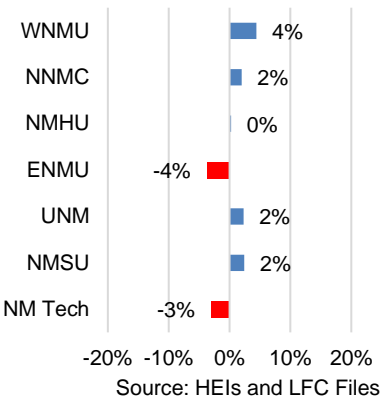


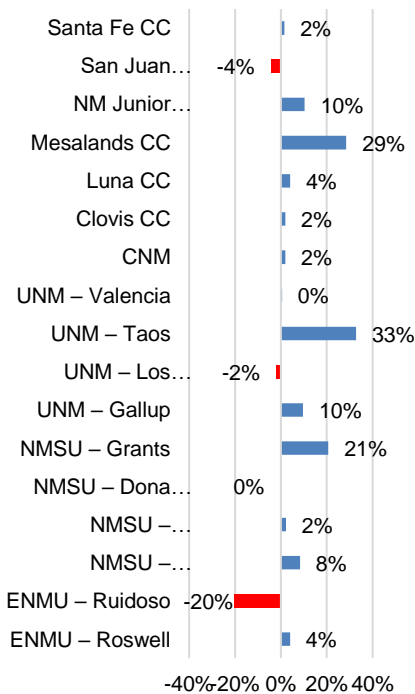
ACTION PLAN

Submitted by agency?	No
Timeline assigned?	No
Responsibility assigned?	No

2nd Semester Retention at Four-year Universities Year-over-Year change



3rd Semester Retention at Two-year Colleges: Year-over-Year change



Higher Education Institutions: Retention Rate

Imagine running a billion-dollar company with two-year old data. Analogous to this is performance management for higher education, which is hindered by the lack of data availability in real time. Each year, the Legislature invests in programs aimed at improving student outcomes, then must wait a year or more for the data to catch up to inform those decisions.

Persistent data lags confound managing for performance at New Mexico's institutions of higher education. Compounding the problem of stale data is reporting consistency within the higher education sector. The four-year universities and the two-year colleges do not report the same information at the same time.

The data exists; it is being collected on a real-time basis at institutions. Every semester, colleges and universities gather tremendous amounts of data on students: the number of students enrolled, the number of classes a student completes, a student's academic performance in those classes, a student's success in progressing through their degree plan as examples. Equally important, institutions possess data on the number of students who leave school, but only anecdotally know where the students go. System wide, institutions have not formalized data reporting on retention.

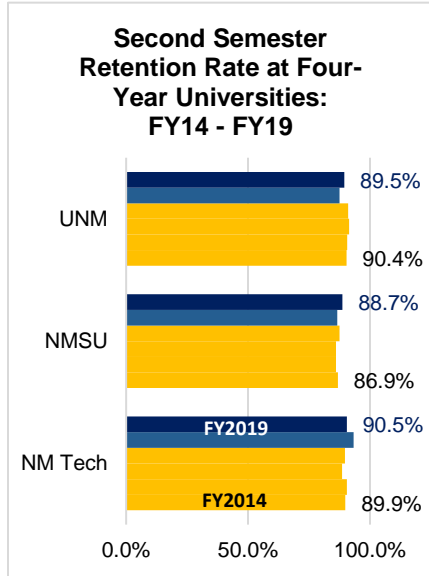
Working with the colleges and universities, LFC staff are leading an effort to restructure data reporting and data submission to ensure colleges and universities report the same data at the same time. More importantly, the effort will seek to use existing real-time data to inform decision-making by publishing meaningful data routinely.

Second Semester Retention Rates at Universities

For the spring data submissions, four-year universities provide one data point – second semester retention rate – for quarterly reporting. Second-semester retention quantifies the number of full-time freshman who enroll in the following semester, and by deduction, the number of freshman who do not persist.

The data captured – as students' progress in their postsecondary studies – are important metrics to inform college administrators on the effectiveness of their institutional management, and in particular, their support of students at a crucial time in a student's academic career. Students abandoning their studies prior to completion of a degree program is wastefully expensive for the students and for the state. Arguably, the state is the largest payer of tuition within the higher education system, paying as much as 50 percent of the cost of tuition for students. Students who do not persist are a lost opportunity, or negative externality, to higher education initiatives to increase the number of adults with postsecondary credentials.

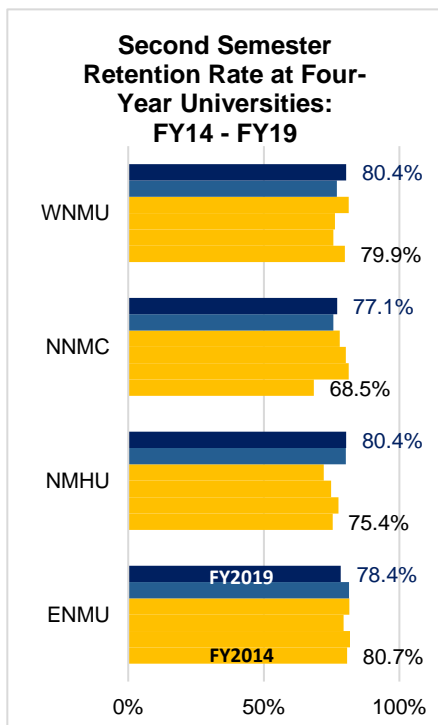
A focus on strategies for improving retention rates among all institutions is the desired outcome from this data. Colleges and universities in New Mexico – relative to their regional and national peers – have set targets, in many cases, below national benchmarks. The LFC quarterly report assesses performance, based on the year-over-year results compared against targets.



Four-Year Research Universities. Generally, selective admissions of higher aptitude students reflect higher retention rates at a university. Naturally then, the research universities have retention rates higher than the open-admission universities and the two-year colleges. Research universities, on a national level, attain a 96.1 percent second-semester retention rate, a trend that has been improving for the past five years. New Mexico research universities are also improving. Their retention rates, however, still lag their peers.

NMSU has shown the greatest improvement, reflecting the impact of institutional restructuring efforts. NMSU implemented training for faculty to provide early alerts to advisors about struggling students and provides additional supports for at-risk students. New Mexico Tech reported improved retention of students over its target, but, its year-to-year performance declined compared with the prior years' performance, an exceptional year. UNM, on the other hand, has experienced a decreasing retention rate, but last year, reversed this trend, employing a concerted effort to early identify struggling students and provide sufficient support.

Measure: First-time, Full-Time Freshman Fall-to-Spring Retention	Fall 2016 to Spring 2017 Actual	Fall 2017 to Spring 2018 Actual	Fall 2018 to Spring 2019 Target	Fall 2018 to Spring 2019 Actual	Rating
New Mexico Institute of Mining & Tech	89.7%	93.3%	90%*	90.5%	Y
New Mexico State University	87.5%	86.6%	88.2%	88.7%	G
University of New Mexico	91%	87.5%	90%	89.5%	Y
Program Rating	Y				Y
*NM Tech has revised its target recently.					



Four-Year Comprehensive Universities. Four-year comprehensive institutions demonstrated mixed results. Nationally, 81.1 percent of freshman continue after the second semester at open-admissions universities. Both WNMU and Northern New Mexico College outperformed in this sector. New Mexico Highlands University saw improvement from the prior year almost hitting its target. Yet, the NMHU target was lower than the national average.

The results at ENMU are worsening, with a year-over-year reduction of 4 percent. Like most universities in New Mexico, ENMU's full-time freshman class has declined, and the number of students leaving is a smaller quantity than prior years. For instance, ENMU enrolled 425 freshmen in 2010, of which 75 left the school, an 82.4 percent retention rate. This year, the retention rate is 78.4 percent, equating to 48 students leaving.

Measure: First-time, Full-Time Freshman Fall-to-Spring Retention	Fall 2016 to Spring 2017 Actual	Fall 2017 to Spring 2018 Actual	Fall 2018 to Spring 2019 Target	Fall 2018 to Spring 2019 Actual	Rating
Eastern NM University	81.5%	81.4%	84%	78.4%	R
Western NM University	81.8%	80.2%	81.5%	80.4%	Y
NM Highlands University	72.1%	75.6%	78%*	77.1%	Y
Northern NM College	78%	77%	80%	80.4%	G
Program Rating	Y	Y			Y
*reflect targets for performance set low compared to peers and national benchmarks					

Third Semester Retention Rates at Community Colleges

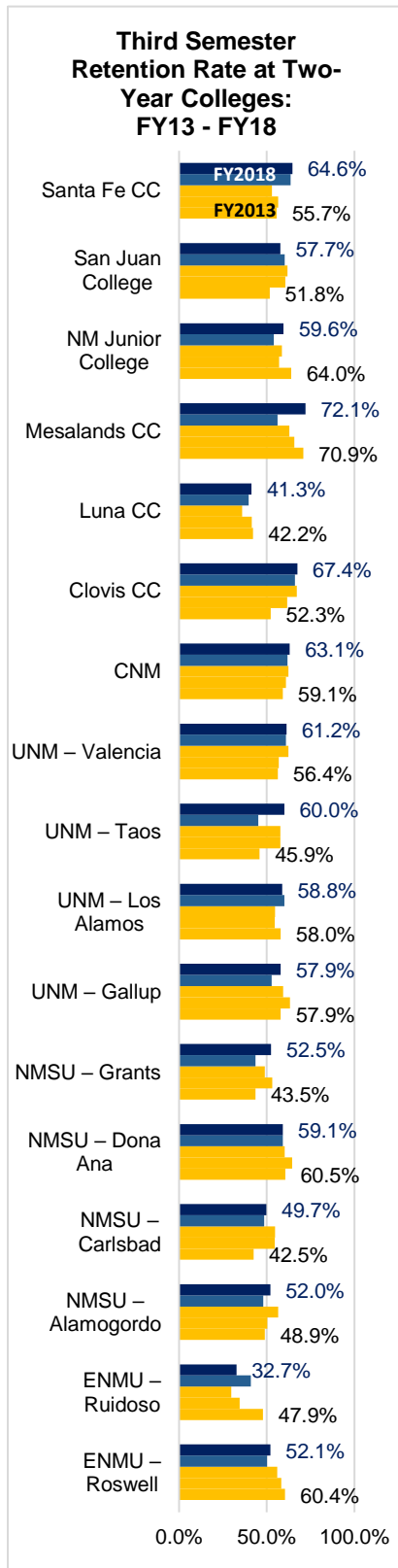
As mentioned previously, two-year colleges do not report second semester retention at the same schedule as the four-year universities, and instead, report third-semester data for this quarterly report. The data lag is not useful for evaluating effective strategies in play at these institutions. An additional data constraint at two-year colleges is the reliance on first-time, full-time students. Student populations at community colleges have a higher percentage of part-time and nontraditional students than universities. As a result, the retention rates reported below fail to address the efforts to retain the majority of students attending community colleges throughout the state.

Retention Rates at Branch Campuses. Community colleges continue to experience significant variance in fall-to-fall retention rates, with only six colleges exceeding the national benchmark, 60 percent. The UNM branch campuses outperformed their peer branch campuses with all exceeding their targets. Only UNM – Los Alamos underperformed its prior-year performance.

An interesting observation is the performance grouping of colleges in close geographic proximity to one another. Geographically, the four branch campuses in southeastern New Mexico set low targets, resulting in weak ratings. The schools exceeded their low targets. These branch campuses may be experiencing substantial enrollment and retention impacts from the vibrant economy in the region.

Measure: First-time, Full-Time Freshman Fall-to-Fall Retention	Fall 2015 to Fall 2016 Actual	Fall 2016 to Fall 2017 Actual	Fall 2017 to Fall 2018 Target	Fall 2017 to Fall 2018 Actual	Rating
ENMU - Roswell	55.9%	50.1%	54%	52.1%	Y
ENMU - Ruidoso	29.7%	41%	43.5%*	32.7%	R
NMSU - Alamogordo	56.5%	48%	50%*	52%	Y
NMSU - Carlsbad	56.5%	48.6%	48%*	49.7%	Y
NMSU - Dona Ana CC	54.7%	59.2%	62.0%	59.1%	Y
NMSU - Grants	60.3%	43.5%	52%	52.5%	Y
UNM - Gallup	48.9%	52.8%	57.5%	57.9%	Y
UNM - Los Alamos	59.4%	60%	56.0%	58.8%	Y
UNM - Taos	54.7%	45.2%	49.5%*	60%	Y
UNM - Valencia	57.7%	60.9%	55%	61.2%	Y
Central NM Community College	62.3%	61.9%	63.3%	63.1%	Y
Clovis Community College	62.3%	66.1%	70%	67.4%	Y
Luna Community College	67.2%	39.7%	60%	41.3%	R
Mesalands Community College	35.9%	56.1%	65%	72.1%	G
New Mexico Junior College	62.9%	54%	65%	59.6%	Y
San Juan College	58.7%	60.3%	60%	57.7%	Y
Santa Fe Community College	61.9%	63.6%	58.7%	64.6%	G
Program Rating	R	Y			Y
*reflect targets for performance set low compared to peers and national benchmarks					

Retention Rates at Independent Community Colleges. With one exception, the Independent Community Colleges outperformed the two-year branch campuses by a wide margin. While most of the independent colleges exceeded the national benchmark, the career and technical education (CTE) pathways may be different enough to warrant assessing these schools against a CTE national benchmark in the future.



Student Retention: Best Practices at Colleges and Universities

ACT has conducted four major studies of student retention to examine the challenges students overcome to complete their degrees. The principles of its original study, in 1980, remain relevant: students seek out academic stimulation, requiring assistance during the journey; students seek continual guidance on identifying a degree path to align with future employment opportunities or interests; and students value experiential learning opportunities for their educational and social value.

Several institutions have developed programs that serve as best practices for engaging students and improving retention through degree completion. Examples include:

- seamless student service support with attentive and timely communication with students;
- rewarding faculty for more active academic advising and student performance tracking;
- cohort programming such as special freshman orientation events or learning communities;
- use of early warning systems or predictive analytics;
- real-time redesign of general education courses with high fail rates.

Georgia State University, a four-year research university based in Atlanta, has become the model for using real-time data to improve student success. Every day, student and academic advisers track more than 800 risk factors to assess student performance: class withdrawals, test performance, financial stress, etc. If the advisers see reason to be concerned about a student, the University jumps into action – a meaningful engagement with a struggling student – within 48 hours. Using data in real time, Georgia State has improved its graduation rate from 32 percent to 58 percent.

New Mexico colleges and universities are beginning to adopt similar methodologies for using more current data or using predictive analytics to inform decision making. Both UNM and NMSU have implemented performance management structures to take advantage of their data capture, rather than simply using data to comply with federal reporting requirements.

The historical data show volatility for certain institutions, which may point to underlying problems with the support systems for students. These small colleges are highly sensitive to small changes in student enrollment and retention because of small student cohorts being measured. Small student cohorts also impact branch campuses, such as ENMU-Ruidoso, NMSU Grants, and NMSU-Alamogordo. Mesalands and Luna Community College exhibit substantial decreases or increases from year-to-year for this reason.

Adjunct Faculty Data and Student-Faculty Ratios

Nationally, the number of faculty has grown by 49 percent from 2000 to 2017. Part-time faculty doubled compared with full-time faculty. The use of adjunct faculty, either part-time or full-time, is predominant throughout New Mexico institutions, where many of the two-year colleges rely more heavily on adjuncts. Although, anomalies do exist: more than 50 percent of faculty at three of the comprehensive universities in New Mexico are adjuncts and conversely, an equal number of two-year colleges rely more heavily on full-time tenured faculty.

Research correlates student success with quality and consistency of instruction. Over-reliance on part-time instructors, who may change from year-to-year and who may spend less time with students, could adversely affect student performance, leading to lower retention rates. Some experts also say that students who take more courses from adjunct faculty members are less likely to graduate or transfer, while research shows that there are positive educational outcomes from taking courses from full-time professors, including higher grades and stronger retention.

